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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [RS](#) [GG](#)
SUBJECT: TFGG01: NO SYSTEMATIC HARASSMENT OF ETHNIC
GEORGIANS IN RUSSIA

REF: A. MOSCOW 02370
[1](#)B. MOSCOW 02214
[1](#)C. VLADIVOSTOK 00091

Classified By: Political Minister Counselor Alice G. Wells; reason 1.4(d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Georgian diplomats and a representative of the Georgian community in Moscow confirmed to us August 20 that they have not yet observed any significant or systematic increase in anti-Georgian harassment by Russian authorities or from the Russian public at large. While noting that the continuing anti-Georgian campaign in the Russian media made them uncomfortable, they said they hoped the situation would continue to slowly improve despite the backdrop of strained multilateral relations and past ethnic tensions. The FSB continued its campaign to root out Georgian spies, arresting a senior Russian army leader for treason. End Summary.

Local Reps Deny Any Increase in Harassment

[1](#)2. (C) Georgian Embassy in Moscow official George Zakarashvili reported to PolOff that, as of August 20, no additional reports of harassment and violence against Georgian citizens had been submitted to the embassy since August 12 (Reftel A). Georgian embassy officials did note the closure of one Georgian citizen's hunting and fishing equipment business in Vladivostok (Reftel C); however, the representatives could not confirm that the closure was a result of any organized anti-Georgian activity on the part of local authorities.

[1](#)3. (C) Johnny Kvartsali, head of the Moscow-based Georgian diaspora NGO "Lezare", told PolOff while the Georgian community in Moscow remains tense and concerned about increased violence in the city, he had not heard of any new, specific incidents of violence targeting Georgians in Russia. He admitted that many ethnic Georgians faced increased scrutiny in the streets, especially from authorities checking documentation. He profusely thanked PolOff for the Embassy's support and promised to remain in close contact should evidence of an anti-Georgian campaign exist.

[1](#)4. (C) Moscow Human Rights Bureau (MHRB) Executive Director Natalia Rykhova reported to PolOff that little evidence of a large anti-Georgian campaign in Russia exists, largely due to Medvedev's call for tolerance in the early stages of the conflict. The Kremlin-supported MHRB produced a report entitled "Anti-Georgian Acts in Connection with the War in South Ossetia" on August 19, largely a collection of previously published press items. In the report, the MHRB stated that the current mood in Russia has not reached that of late 2006 when Russians railed against ethnic Georgians. It further details previous statements by nationalist leaders, youth group protests, and some acts of violence previously covered in reporting (Reftel B). Rykhova added that the Russian racist organization Format 18 equally "saw

Ossetians and Georgians as animals" while the so-called Northern Brotherhood decried the war as a means to allow "Ossetians to drive further into Russia their bathtub liquor, from which many Russian men are dying."

Primakov on Anti-Georgian Campaign

15. (SBU) In an August 19 meeting with the Ambassador, former PM Yevgeniy Primakov strongly rejected the notion of a new anti-ethnic Georgian campaign in Russia, noting his own outspokenness on the issue in the fall of 2006. Stressing that he was very close to the Georgian community, by dint of his upbringing in Tbilisi, a web of family ties (his first wife - a Georgian; his half-Georgian son; his Georgian son-in-law) and friends, Primakov said that Georgians were depressed by the situation, but not persecuted. Most Georgians in Russia, he maintained, shared the average Russian's condescension towards Saakashvili and mourned the damage inflicted upon Georgia, but "were surviving." Primakov, who publicly criticized the Russian government in 2006, said he was monitoring the situation, but saw nothing more than isolated incidents, which were not out of the ordinary for Moscow's mean streets.

Russians Searching for Georgian Spies

16. (SBU) The Federal Security Service (FSB) continued its search for Georgian spies on August 20, arresting senior officer Mikhail Hachidze in the Russian Army in Stavropol Krai for suspected espionage against Russia. The GOR charged him with treason under Article 275 of the legal code.

Hachidze allegedly transferred a collection of classified reports on Russia's armed forces, military preparedness, and information about his fellow officers. This action followed on the heels of the FSB's August 11 arrest of nine supposed Georgian secret agents for allegedly conducting intelligence on military installations and preparing terrorist acts in Russia. FSB Director Aleksandr Borotnikov reported about alleged preparations of Georgian Special Forces to conduct terrorist acts in the North Caucasus in an August 19 meeting of the National Anti-terrorism Committee. He noted that he instructed the Anti-terrorism Committee and the Border Service to ensure the security of governmental departments, transportation lines, industry, electrical grids, and large gathering areas, especially in the Southern Federal District.

Alarmist Media Coverage?

17. (SBU) The Moscow Times reported on August 20 that ethnic Georgians continued to fall victim to harassment and violence in Russia in the wake of events in South Ossetia. The article cited an incident where a 37-year old Georgian woman was spat upon because of her ethnicity, as well as a second incident concerning the abrupt, inexplicable closure of a Georgian market in Moscow by four unidentified men. However, the article included dated accounts of the beating, robbery, and hospitalization of a 55-year old Georgian man in Moscow and youth group protests in front of the Georgian embassy as evidence of a larger campaign against Georgians. Past reports of a August 12 Georgian cafe arson in Moscow and the beating of a female Georgian cab driver in Chelyabinsk on August 9 remained the most violent acts reported.

Comment

18. (C) Ethnic Georgian leaders in Moscow remained cautious, yet hopeful, about the current state of affairs. The absence of widespread violence and harassment bodes well in comparison to the level of scrutiny levied against Georgians in 2006.
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